



12 December 2006

Update on public health issues related to Polonium-210 investigation

HPA Update Statement

The Health Protection Agency is continuing to provide expert advice on the public health issues surrounding the death of Mr. Alexander Litvinenko. Throughout, our primary concern has been to protect the public.

Po-210 can only represent a radiation hazard if it is taken into the body – by breathing it in, by taking it into the mouth, or if it gets into a wound. It is not a radiological hazard as long as it remains outside the body. Most traces of it can be eliminated through hand-washing, or washing machine and dishwasher cycles for clothes, plates etc.

On the basis of the monitoring results received so far from a range of sites we still believe that the risk to the general public of having been exposed to Po-210 is likely to be very low.

International Contacts

- The Agency has provided briefing packs for London-based representatives of 180 countries and territories;
- Further briefing was provided to the representatives of the 44 countries and territories whose citizens had been guests at certain hotels – Millennium Hotel Grosvenor Square, Best Western Shaftesbury Avenue and the Sheraton Park Lane – as well as password-protected information to enable them to contact the individuals concerned;
- The Agency has so far received 950 emails through its overseas advice channel for those who are unable to access NHS Direct;
- The Agency has proactively contacted all its international public health counterparts, providing them with briefing packs and including them in correspondence relating to any individuals being followed up in their home countries;
- The Agency has been in contact with various European Laboratories on Po-210 measurements, for example with colleagues at the Forschungszentrum at Jülich who are carrying out Po-210 monitoring in Germany . It is also in similar contact with the Institut de Radioprotection et de Surete Nucleaire (IRSN) in France, the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK-CEN) and the International Atomic Energy Agency's analytical laboratory at Seibersdorf in Austria.

Test results update

The Agency's public health follow-up has included testing urine samples from those in close contact with Mr. Litvinenko, those who worked or were present in the affected areas and, where appropriate, those who called for advice via NHS Direct.

- **250** urine samples so far tested by the Agency have found nothing of concern. The Agency continues to contact people to inform them of their results.
- There are **8** samples which have shown exposure to some Polonium-210 (Po-210). The levels are not significant enough to result in any illness in the short term and any increased risk in the long term is likely to be very small.
- As of midnight, Monday December 11, NHS Direct had received a total of **3,696** calls since HPA advice was issued on Sat Nov 25;
- Of these, by noon Tuesday December 12, the HPA had followed up **625** people who, following assessment, needed further investigation. 204 of these people had been in the Pine Bar on 1 Nov, had already been in touch with NHS Direct and are now being re-contacted.
- The total number of people so far referred as a precaution to a specialist outpatient assessment clinic for possible radiological exposure assessment is **29** (27 from NHS Direct, and 2 via other routes)

Locations

- For the latest information on locations go to the London Resilience Team website at www.londonprepared.gov.uk

The police investigation continues. We will provide further public information as appropriate.

Notes to Editors:

1. Preliminary results received from seven members of staff working in The Pine Bar of the Millennium Hotel on Nov 1 show that they appear to have had some exposure to Polonium-210.

Following this information we felt it prudent to assess any other staff working in The Pine Bar of the Millennium Hotel, on Oct 31 and Nov 2. We are working with the hotel management to try and identify any other relevant staff. We have also advised that any member of the public in The Pine Bar on Oct 31 and Nov 2 (in addition to Nov 1) contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 who will pass on their details to the HPA for further assessment.

Our advice has also been that anyone who was in The Pine Bar on Nov 1, who has not yet contacted NHS Direct, is invited to do so.

2. The Agency is writing to offer further advice to those people who were in The Pine Bar on Nov 1 and who have already contacted NHS Direct. A special helpline, staffed by experienced HPA staff, has been set up. If any of these people want this, a urine sample will be tested. Arrangements will be made for information to be provided to international guests.
3. Overseas visitors who were in the Pine Bar of the Millennium Hotel on Oct 31, Nov 1 and Nov 2 should email the Health Protection Agency for advice: overseasadvice@hpa.org.uk. If you do not have access to email you can contact NHS Direct on 00 (44) 845 4647 but only via a mobile telephone if you are calling from abroad. (If this does not connect you please try 0845 46 47 instead – again only from a mobile)
4. Further information is available on www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk and www.hpa.org.uk
5. Media enquiries to HPA London press office on 020 7759 2824 or 2834 or to HPA CRCE press office on 01235 822 678 or 01235 822 744.
If you are calling out of hours please use 020 8200 4400